

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to air the Kerry documentary as if it were news is clearly disingenuous and an attempt to get around election laws requiring an FCC licensed broadcaster to be balanced in their treatment of the candidates. The failure of the media to act as a separate "Estate" in the U.S. political process is at a crisis level. The decisions of the Bush Administration to act pre-emptively in attacking Iraq seems to have heightened this failure. By defining the response to 9/11 as a "war," media may be confused about their role: cheerleaders for the "causa belli" or informer of the public regarding an unfolding set of events in which the public have a vital interest requiring an independent perspective. The Sinclair situation serves to highlight this problem. The FCC can help in clarify this dilemma. My belief is that our democratic process and ultimately our long term security as a nation will be served by an open debate on this issue, sponsored by the FCC and inviting broad public participation. If this results in a decision to honor the "watchdog" role for the media, appropriate policy guidance from the FCC should be drafted and ratified by the Congress and the President so as to remove all doubt about our expectations from the media.

Sincerely,
Vern Taylor, Ph.D.